

Appl. No. : 10/663,381
Filed : September 15, 2003

REMARKS

A. Introduction

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application. Claims 1-13 and 15-28 are pending in the application. The Examiner has indicated that Claims 7 and 10-13 are allowed. Claims 26-28, which depend from Claim 13, should also be allowable.

Applicants submit that this application is now in condition for allowance, and Applicants earnestly request such action. Below, Applicants address each of the Examiner's reasons for rejection.

B. All Claims are Patentable Over the Cited References

Itoi

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-4, 8 and 15-17 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,932,781 to Itoi. Applicants respectfully submit that Itoi is not prior art to the present application. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Applicants enclose herewith a Declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131. The Declaration shows that Applicants had made an actual reduction to practice of the claimed invention at least as early as June 4, 2003. Since the earliest U.S. priority date of Itoi is July 11, 2003, Applicants reduced the claimed invention to practice prior to the effective date of Itoi. Accordingly, Itoi is not prior art to the present application.

Since Itoi is not prior art to the present application, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-4, 8 and 15-17 are allowable over Itoi. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

Itoi in view of Gaylord and further in view of Schaefer

The Examiner rejected Claims 5, 6, 18-20, 23 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Itoi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,659,971 to Gaylord and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,598,701 to Schaefer. As explained above, Itoi is not prior art to the present application. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable over Itoi in view of Gaylord and further in view of Schaefer, and Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

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Itoi

The Examiner rejected Claims 9, 21 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Itoi in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,407,420 to Bastyr. As explained above, Itoi is not prior art to the present application. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable over Itoi in view of Bastyr, and Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

CONCLUSION

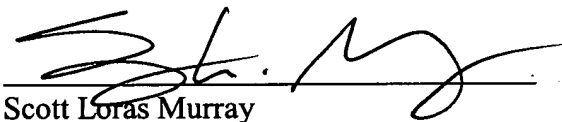
For the reasons presented above, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. If there is any further hindrance to allowance of the pending claims, Applicants invite the Examiner to contact the undersigned.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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